



Wisdom Path
by Judi Thomases
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**Dell Horoscope Article
Published January, 2004**

**SPIRITUALIZING SATURN:
THE PRINCIPLE OF CONTAINMENT**

By Judi Thomases

HOLDING ON, HOLDING IN, OR HOLDING UP?

We all know that Saturn takes about 28-29 years to encircle the Zodiac, meaning that every planet and angle in your horoscope will be contacted by it that often to ensure its own delightful brand of challenge! And if you live double or triple that age, you'll enjoy that much more of the "fun." While Saturn conjuncting *anything* is always a trial, one of the most difficult of its passages is its journey over (or square, or opposing, et al) the Moon, representing the emotions. We'll get to this later.

Tracking Saturn

In general, there are several ways to experience Saturn's passages, especially the hard ones. Of course, there's the natal (birth) pattern. Occurring during one's formative years, there is nothing to do about it but live through it...and some don't! But there are also transits, progressions (secondary and solar arc), returns (solar, lunar, and Saturn's own), eclipses and other lunations. Saturn's *transits* take about three-quarters of a year over a particular degree (although every so often a lucky soul can see it zoom by in mere weeks! 1). This longer passage will feel like an eternity, and in the event of its own return - depending on its natal aspects - can be one of the more difficult periods in life.

Lunar *returns*, by definition, last only the month; solar, the year. If Saturn shows up in these in especially difficult aspects, the given period will be problematical. *Eclipses and lunations* (new and full moons) will trigger natal or newly-formed patterns, and their influence can last anywhere from a few weeks to many months. And finally (saving the "best" for last), Saturn's *progressions* will drag on for a year or two before exactitude and for the good part of the year that it wanes away. (The thing to realize about progressions is that Saturn itself, being a slow-moving outer planet, will not move far from its birth position by *secondary* progression, but can move quite a distance away from its birth position by *solar arc* progression (also called solar arc direction), a calculation based upon adding the solar arc to every other planet in the birth chart. This latter type of progression allows Saturn to reach natal planets *to which it had no original connection*, and also allows other planets to reach it, kind of like a transit.)

Since Saturn's transits to any degree are felt for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a year, and Saturn's solar arc progressions for 3-4 years (two approaching, one on, and one leaving), both types of passages can represent quite a challenging period in one's life. And just for good measure, yes, it's possible to have solar arc Saturn conjuncting a natal planet at the same time that transiting Saturn does so (or makes a hard aspect to it), and even have difficult combinations emphasized by Saturn in a solar return chart, and/or with a few lunations to these sensitive degrees thrown in for good measure! Whew!



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Now, just imagine if all that "damage" was focused on the one planet in your chart where you're most vulnerable: the Moon! I'll get to this in a moment.

The Principle of Containment

As a Capricorn with my natal Saturn in aspect to my Sun, Mercury, Moon, Node, Jupiter, and Pluto, and having recently experienced a Saturn station on an angle, and both a prolonged solar arc progressed Saturn-Moon combination and a Saturn transit squaring my Moon, *and* soon to have a hard Saturn transit that will form a grand cardinal cross to Sun, Mercury and Midheaven), I've found myself contemplating Saturn's energy in order to figure out a positive way to handle it. (It was either that, or curl up and fetal-ize!) In this regard, I've come up with what I'll call The Principle of Containment. It uses both Saturn's limitations and Capricorn's patience and gallows humor, and its application will, I believe, carry you to wisdom and empowerment.

In short, what I'm proposing is a way to handle Saturn in order to mitigate *but not deny* suffering.

Emotional Pain

Sometimes emotional pain comes about through a loss, but it can also occur because of a lesson. While the key event often occurs under a hard Saturn passage, it sometimes happens earlier and is suffered only when Saturn forms its subsequent aspect, such as the shell-shock of a dynamic incident and the later unfolding of its ensuing emotion. When people are in pain, they either grieve and suffer or repress their ache, as though these are their only choices. Whereas grief is healthy and repression is not, excess grief can run amok and paralyze. Sadness, given full rein, can devolve into depression, illness, isolation, and many other lingering negative expressions of aching emotion.

In truth, it's neither the loss, restriction, or frustration of the lesson that causes suffering; it's the emotions that arise from such. If we, as humans, did not have the gift of feelings we would react to the event as do animals: in the moment, alert, processing the new development, taking the change in stride, and moving on [2](#). We wouldn't develop anxieties, diseases, and complexes, or need Prozac!

There is a lot to learn from the animals, who bear up to their fate with aplomb, and simply integrate all that befalls them into their total experience of being-ness, whereas humans dramatize their plights and make mountains out of the simplest travail. You are above the animal kingdom but not separate from it. Look to the creatures of the physical plane as a kind of role model, and take what comes as part of your lessons, part of your destiny.

-- Received via The Brotherhood of Light Workers on 8/31/01

In the case of natal (karmic, very early) experience, we can do little about this because on a soul level we've chosen to begin life with certain challenges and don't have enough self-awareness as yet to do anything about our childhood predicaments. But as adults we have choice. And choice can lead us away from suffering and into something more manageable, more contented.

Curiously, as this concept was jelling in my mind, an article appeared in a national magazine [3](#) discussing the burgeoning understanding that a tenet of modern psychotherapy - remembering and venting one's trauma - may produce more suffering than healing for the patient. Researchers, in other words, are realizing that the upshot of



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encouraging someone to wallow in his or her pain only prolongs darkness, resulting in the opposite of health. The article went on to proclaim the virtues of repressing the dark memories instead of dwelling in them.

This direction is similar to where I too was headed, except that rather than head backwards towards "repression", I'm veering off towards something else, something that can be considered a different way of handling one's pain. I've chosen to call it "containment." Let me explain:

Containment versus Repression

Pain is an emotion. (We're not discussing the physical kind of pain here, but this process can have application even for that.) Emotion is, almost by definition, the opposite of structure, of form, of boundaries. It's hard to uncover emotion's borders: when did it begin, what is its middle, and when will it end? Likewise, it's difficult if not impossible to assign a measurable quality to emotion: is it weak or strong? Does my pain hurt more than yours? At best, emotional pain is relative. It's relative from person to person, and from one event to another. It's relative over the passage of time. And it's even relative in the way people process an event through their heredity, culture, age and so forth. The stoic and the hysteric will react quite differently to the same incident, as will the youth and the sage, or the hero and the 98-lb.-weakling! But none of it can be considered "wrong". It's all just part of being human. The only generalization about emotional pain that is always true is that we hate being in it and devoutly want to get past it when we are!

Emotional pain is one of the most human of all conditions. Its sufferance leads directly to compassion, the ability to empathize with another whose pain is recognized and remembered. Those few people who are really incapable of feeling pain exhibit behavior that the rest of us usually label inhuman - cold, robotic, deadened, unfeeling, zombie-ish. In fact, other than a few really new souls (called "infant souls"), most of those who exhibit such behavior are actually so numbed by prolonged and acute pain that their only coping strategy is to retreat into an unfeeling state. It is beyond the scope of this article, or my training, to explore such type of psychological trauma further, but it's my intention to provide an alternative approach to those of us who are facing pain that is still within manageable proportions.

The two usual coping strategies, as mentioned, are repression and expression. By the latter, to express, is meant to let grief have full rein *ad infinitum* whereas by the former, to repress, is meant to bury, to forcibly stuff under. My dictionary defines repression thus: "To keep under restraint or control. To put down; quell, as a rebellion. To check, curb, rein, restrain, subdue, suppress." This takes energy and is hard work. The image I get is of something rascally that wants to keep popping out, or worse, something monstrous under wraps that wants to escape! Neither choice seems desirable to me.

On the other hand, there is this thing I've been talking about: containment. My dictionary defines containment this way: "The act or fact of containing; holding, enclosing, surrounding. To include or compromise. To keep within bounds, as oneself or one's feelings."

It seems a much better strategy. Emotional pain can be held in conscious awareness, enclosed and surrounded by observation, neither allowed to run wild nor pushed down into the subconscious. It can be *witnessed* and thus



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managed. The principle of containment means that you can learn to sit with your pain without needing to run from it...so long as you learn how to negotiate it. What better way to use Saturn to your Moon than to create a protective structure within which your feelings can be held as you work with your other powers to endure, to thrive, and to remain creative?

How to Practice Containment

How does it work? How can you utilize it as a valuable technique in a period of sadness? I would not be able to teach this if I had not applied it to my own experience first. Yes, it takes effort. Yes, you will lapse, then have another go at it! But it's do-able, especially for us astrologers who have the priceless gift of foresight to see happier times ahead. We, more than any humans on earth, can define the boundaries of our time of pain, knowing when it will end or be surpassed by happier energies.

Pain is felt viscerally. Let me try to describe it. Your heart aches. Your gut is tense, upset, unsettled. Your thoughts go straight to gloom, to every misery you ever felt of a similar nature, to every depressive expectation you ever cradled in your mind. When an attempt is made to see ahead, you can envision only a future full of the same misery as you now feel. So, quite literally, the past, present and future all stink! And there's no surcease, no space for anything but the aching. It's hell to reside in your body or your mind. For God's sake, you're *in pain!!!*

What would it take to remain in the present, to observe the pain?

First, you'd need to strengthen your core and center your energies by pulling in all loose ends. Believe in yourself. Learn to tame neediness. Don't rush outwards in a vain search for escape (pills, alcohol, co-dependency, risky gambling - in fact, every addiction). Every person you lean on is one of your loose ends. (Having loose ends is the opposite of feeling whole.) Every substance you turn to is another loose end. All such actions dissipate your power. You'd have to watch yourself sending energies outward to these places in a self-defeating attempt to numb the misery, and then wake up to see this very process as weakening. You'd have to find the strength to pull back inwards every useless act of this sort, every wasteful action. When you pull in all your loose strings, you find yourself growing stronger, more whole, less and less needy.

Next, you'd need to protect your boundaries. Say no! If a person is the source (cause) of your pain, cut him/her loose. Even if he/she is beloved, or family, remove yourself from his/her influence (at least temporarily). Aloneness is not the source of pain when "togetherness" was the root of it in the first place. Go within; get to know yourself much better. Enjoy yourself for your blessed qualities, and deliberately erase (cancel out) any hurtful comments another has made about you...providing that you first gain any morsels of wisdom from such, if possible. Polish the beauty of your true nature; eradicate the obvious imperfections. But never buy into the ugliness of another's jealous words. Make it your project to love yourself, and to project that love outwards. Work hard at being (becoming) a terrific person to be around, and you'll soon find others gravitating towards your magnetic attraction.

And finally, you'd need to look for help only by going upwards (spiritual searching) not outwards (other people, dependency). Immerse yourself in wisdom teachings. Seek authentic masters, and reject the phonies. Learn the spiritual trick of moving into joy by altering your thought construct(s). Then the chemistry of the body will follow. In



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a recent article, 4 factors that constituted authentic happiness included an "everybody wins" strategy, tapping into good moments and successes in the past to deal with present problems, determining which strengths to use or avoid with particular people or situations, finding open doors when others close them, enhancing relationships by aligning one's own with one's partner's strengths, and leaving a legacy. In another recent article, 5 listing (i.e., counting) one's blessings resulted in marked improvements in mental health and even some aspects of physical health as well.

This way lays empowerment!

Here's a happy little email going around (author unknown) that illustrates the wonderful power of positive thinking:

ATTITUDE

The 92-year-old, petite, well-poised and proud lady, who is fully dressed each morning by eight o'clock, with her hair fashionably coifed and makeup perfectly applied, even though she is legally blind, moved to a nursing home today. Her husband of 70 years recently passed away, making the move necessary.

After many hours of waiting patiently in the lobby of the nursing home, she smiled sweetly when told her room was ready. As she maneuvered her walker to the elevator, I provided a visual description of her tiny room, including the eyelet sheets that had been hung on her window.

"I love it," she stated with the enthusiasm of an eight-year-old having just been presented with a new puppy. "Mrs. Jones, you haven't seen the room ...just wait."

"That doesn't have anything to do with it," she replied. "Happiness is something you decide on ahead of time. Whether I like my room or not doesn't depend on how the furniture is arranged...it's how I arrange my mind. I already decided to love it. "It's a decision I make every morning when I wake up. I have a choice; I can spend the day in bed recounting the difficulty I have with the parts of my body that no longer work, or get out of bed and be thankful for the ones that do. Each day is a gift, and as long as my eyes open I'll focus on the new day and all the happy memories I've stored away ...just for this time in my life.

Old age is like a bank account ... you withdraw from what you've put in ...So, my advice to you would be to deposit a lot of happiness in the bank account of memories. Thank you for your part in filling my Memory bank. I am still depositing.

Remember the five simple rules to be happy: 1. Free your heart from hatred. 2. Free your mind from worries. 3. Live simply. 4. Give more. 5. Expect less.

Granted, there is pain that is so profound, one cannot simply set it aside by mental exercises. It would help during such a time if you could, even while letting grief wash over you, still strive to contain yourself and to maintain your wholeness with some of these techniques. And so would Saturn's mandate be honored.



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The following country song, which expresses a lot of these sentiments, carried me through much of last year's challenge:

*There's a dark and a troubled side of life
But there's a bright and a sunny side, too.
Though you meet with the darkness and strife
The sunny side you also may view.*

*Keep on the sunny side, always on the sunny side,
Keep on the sunny side of life.
It will help us every day; it will brighten all the way,
If we'll keep on the sunny side of life.*

*Though the storm and its furies rage today,
Crushing hope that we cherish so dear,
The cloud and storm will in time pass away,
And the sun again will shine bright and clear.*

(Chorus)

-- KEEP ON THE SUNNY SIDE, Written by A.P. Carter/Sharon White 6

Profound Philosophy

From the larger view we are talking once again, of course, about co-creating one's entire reality. Not just a mind game, but an entirely different approach to the lessons of earth-plane physical life with all its attendant challenges of emotion and choice, *mastery of Saturn means mastery of some of the "worst" that can be thrown at us.* To be the master of one's emotions is to become empowered, to be the lord of feelings, not their pawn. Not inhuman; rather, superior human! Neither crushed nor numbed, just living in the moment while watching yourself react and respond. What a triumph!

In the thrust of each person's desire to bring into their lives a joyful and fulfilling display that gives them delight in accomplishment and contentment in exploring and manifesting their unique abilities, there is also always a dark side of the coin. There can only be the fulfillment and contentment after a period of struggle. It is never enough to simply open one's eyes each day, and arrive easily at such a destination, for there cannot be the highs without the lows.

So do not grieve that you are experiencing your lows. Do not make the mistake of equating them with the whole of life. Do not think that there is ever a joyless, empty future. That particular path is the source of much pain for human beings, who unfortunately have the tendency to take some moments of life and change them in their minds into the whole of life. The dark days must exist for the bright times to make sense - it is the polarity of life, the fact of life-in-form, the way it's done "down here." But to mistake these periods for your eternal lot in life is where the biggest error lies.



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To grasp this fact clearly is to put aside all need for the suffering tribulation that calls for medication or escape tactics in order to cope. To put aside the notion that one exists in eternal hell inside one's thoughts is to awaken to the greater truth: that one needs the lows to reach the highs. Instead of using drugs, or other forms of painkillers to deaden the pain of your thoughts, you must now call upon your logic, realizing that you can equate these hurts with the tools you brought along to force you to grow.

See thy task, not as coping and struggling merely to survive, but as the needed lessons and required implements to push you along to a higher place - a place that will INEVITABLY bring joy and delight as well as peace and contentment. See your task as that of mountain-climber and not as that of bottom-dweller. Look up, not down. Remain within the thought of where you want to be, not within the thought of where you've bottomed out. Pull yourself upwards, out of your suffering, and you can throw away all your devices (weak, temporary, and insufficient) that you have relied upon to bring ease. You will no longer need them when you learn this simple trick - the trick of awakening into your glory!

There is not a soul alive who cannot perform this trick.
-- Received via The Brotherhood of Light Workers on 8/8/01

Do not expect from life either that which is pleasant...or that which is full of pain. Expect instead that which is interesting, perhaps even exciting, as something new and untried must often be. Expect in this fashion, and you will be less likely to drop down into a morass of despair and hurt... or to find yourself floating upwards into a cloud of beautiful imaginings. Both attitudes, based upon faulty expectation, leave one unstabilized, unanchored, and subject to the winds of fortune. Then, upon experiencing life's vicissitudes, one either crashes to earth or loses all sight of hope. Either outcome is unpleasant and hard to recover from. If, however, one remembers to approach all of one's days on earth as they truly are - expectant of change, certainly challenging, and productive of growth - then one will face any music with considerable strength and preparedness. We can gently guide the soul away from its disastrous resultant moods, but it's much better if precautions in this regard are taken from the very beginning in terms of emotional approaches.

-- Received via The Brotherhood of Light Workers on 5/6/03

If you can go through storms while remaining whole and present, you can truly state that you have realized the goal of "awaken[ing] to your responsibility for your own mind and for the state of all life on this planet." 7

FOOTNOTES

¹ This can be seen this year (2003) when Saturn, having stationed at 29° Gemini last October ('02), moves between 0° - 5° Cancer from June 4th to July 20th, but returns only to 6° Cancer in March '04. Anyone lucky enough to have planets between these earliest degrees in Cancer (or in any of the cardinals) will sail through the time-frame, receiving only one touch from the Lord of Karma.



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2 Some animals do exhibit grief upon the death of an offspring, a companion, or as is the case with some pets, an owner, but rarely does the emotion linger, and more rarely still, does it impede the creature's ability to function. I believe that those animals that evidence the more advanced behavior are ready to move up the evolutionary ladder, speaking from an individual reincarnational perspective.

3 "Repress Yourself" by Lauren Slater, *NY Times Magazine*, Feb. 23, 2003.

4 "The Happiest Guy" by Dennis McCafferty, *USA Weekend*, March 7-9, 2003.

5 "Health study shows the power of positive listing", New York Post, 3/11/03, reprinted from the *Washington Post*.

6 From the sound track of the movie "*Oh Brother, Where Art Thou.*"

7 "Breaking Open the Head: A Visionary Journey from Cynicism to Shamanism" by Daniel Pinchbeck. Author Daniel Pinchbeck feels that his work ideally could have an effect on his readers to this effect: "At the sound of my voice, you will awaken to your responsibility for your own mind and for the state of all life on this planet."

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